

Regular Meeting of the Pawtucket School Committee

Tuesday, October 11, 2011

**6:00 PM Jenks/JMW Complex for the Performing and Visual Arts
Media Center**

350 Division Street, Pawtucket RI 02860

I Meeting will come to order

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 6:06 PM.

a. Roll call

Mr. Araujo-here; Ms. Bonollo-here; Mr. Coughlin-here; Mr. Noonan-here; Ms. Nordquist-here; Mr. Tenreiro-here; Mr. Spooner-here

Also in attendance were Mrs. Deborah Cylke, Superintendent of Schools; Ms. Kimberly Mercer, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum Instruction and Assessment; Mr. Thomas Conlon, Business Administrator, and Ms. Margaret Baker, Assistant Business Administrator.

b. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Chairman.

II Recognition/Celebration

None

III Student Representatives

None due to NECAP testing.

IV Public Participation

Mr. Beaupre: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Mrs. Cylke, Ms. Mercer, Mr. Conlon. Tonight I talk about item b. the RIDE designation as Tolman and Shea falling under low

status. Mrs. Cylke and I have had several discussions of them falling into this negative realm. Mrs. Cylke and I share the same beliefs and look at this as an opportunity to work collaboratively on a plan to get us out of this status and create a model for the country and not become like Central Falls. We want to create a plan that creates a graduation rate that becomes the largest across the State. Mrs. Cylke and the Pawtucket Teachers' Association will be working collaboratively to change that negative light to a positive light.

Mrs. Lydia Diaz: Good evening. I am Lydia Diaz and on October 3rd at approximately 2:00 PM the gym teacher sent my daughter with a six year old outside of the building to look for the six year olds sweater. I went to Mr. Hemenway and he said he would address it. He said he would send a message. I talked to Mrs. Cylke and she said it was common, but I would have sent a 6th grader.

There are no cameras at that school. From 8:30 AM to 2:40 PM she is the responsibility of the School Department. I take her to school and pick her up. I can't believe there is no disciplinary action. But if my daughter was to get up and leave the building, she would be disciplined.

The next day we received a letter about a man trying to lure children into his vehicle. I am looking for the teacher to be reprimanded and the Superintendent to be educated.

My daughter was enjoying her little song preparing to start the NECAP testing.

Mrs. Cylke needs to be educated if she thinks this is common. Mr. Hemenway needs to do more than just send a memo.

I hope and pray the Committee does something about this. I appreciate your time and hope to hear from you.

V Presentations-Discussion Items

a. NECAP Science Results – 2011

Ms. Mercer: What you have in front of you is the NECAP Science results from 2008 to 2011. We included the historical data from the State and the local data and as you can see there has been some significant improvement and some have flat lined.

Mr. Araujo: Are there any areas in regard to Science?

Mrs. Cylke: It's a system issue and we are in the process of looking at the elementary grades to see if it's a suitable environment to teach science at that level. Once you have that under control its protocol. Elementary school teaches now that science is engaging and it's critical to teach science with a literacy focus. Resources and how we spend our money—the State is struggling with science. It's the progression of getting skills built to getting them to junior high ready. There are multiple factors that impact them.

When we begin to discuss our needs, we look at the Montgomery County School District. They learn to know how to think and we're sending a team there and working with Pearson Books.

Mr. Tenreiro: The focus is on literacy in grades K-8. There is no guaranteed curriculum.

Ms. Mercer: We cover the standards and have kits at the elementary level.

Mrs. Cylke: I think the key issue is time, integrated curriculum of Montgomery level.

Ms. Nordquist: I think the other issue at the high school is overcrowding. There are too many students and not enough labs.

Ms. Bonollo: Will the Montgomery County curriculum adapt to BEP?

Ms. Mercer: We haven't gone yet.

Mrs. Cylke: They're very clear about thinking and success skills. Like a video game failing is part of learning. Perseverance is part of it. We will take that trip, create curricula that are laser light, but there is a price tag with it.

Ms. Bonollo: I agree with that. My only concern is the investment we put out now and what if RIDE decides it's not viable in two years?

Mrs. Cylke: It's good science instruction and let's say science instruction changes. I wouldn't wait.

Ms. Bonollo: I want to make sure it's adaptable a few years from now.

b. Shea High School and Tolman High School RIDE Designation as "Persistently Low Achieving"

Mrs. Cylke: I want to take the Committee through the major points that got us here. It was a week ago that the Commissioner said she was putting the schools on the list. This designation is based on math scores, reading scores and graduation rates. Both Shea and Tolman have been designated at persistently low for the last three years, 2007-2008; 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 and their graduation rates have been below 60%.

Only having come to Pawtucket in June of last year, I asked for a waiver and the Commissioner said no. I dealt with legal counsel and wanted to know if the designation could start with my tenure. I believe this is a flawed federal policy with good intent. They will

identify 5,000 lowest improving high schools and provide them with money to improve. How many students enter high school ready? Our core business is to graduate them ready to earn a business. We accept hundreds of thousands of dollars in federal funds. There is a hybrid model used by RIDE. We looked at that better of the hybrid model. The expectation is that after four years, you will walk across the stage.

The reality is some kids get lost and they are reported as a drop out; the student who goes through their freshman year with only two credits and sophomore year with a few more decides not to go back. There's an extreme national focus to go onto the next step. A high school diploma equals a confident reader.

Every time a student says they are leaving we have to have another interview and we have to be maniacal in following up so they are not falling in the abyss.

The intervention is this. We must choose one model of reform. Choose a stakeholder group and return to you the model. The four models are:

1. Close the school and send the students to another school. This is designed for larger unified districts like Los Angeles and Chicago.
2. Restart the School—close and reopen as charter management. There are none right now at the high school level.
3. The Turn Around Model. Replace the Principal and 50% of the staff. The assumption is 50% of the teachers are the problem and that certainly isn't the case here.
4. Transformation Model. Requires us to replace the Principal and

realize how time is used during the school day.

I want to thank Mr. Beaupre in helping work through this process. Clearly we can look to our neighbors in Central Falls and see which model did not work.

This recommendation has to go to the Commissioner within thirty days and we have 120 days to come up with a plan. Looking at this it is more of a systems issue.

We have restructured students in algebra and mathematics.

Kim McCaughey did a workshop and kids need to do more writing.

We had professional development in math coaching. We joined the Successful Practice Network. Teachers attended a conference in Tennessee in June. I attended the RISC conference this summer and they have a very young leadership team.

There is a lot going on at Shea. Dr. Sue Szachowicz from Brockton High School said the attitude ten years ago was kids had a right to fail. That has completely changed. We have visitations planned by Brockton and they are very focused on literacy there. There was a big push at that school. Brockton High School was one of only six schools in the country to be awarded the National Change Award by the U. S. Department of Education and Fordham University.

We now have our freshman facilitators in place; Laura Olsen at Tolman and Monique Jacob at Shea.

The course most likely to fail is Algebra I. We bought some materials in that subject.

Those are the reform initiatives on a very limited budget.

When you submit a reform plan, you must do so with a budget. I lost

sleep over that. Dave Abbott said Central Falls spends \$19,000 per student, no actually \$22,000.

Dr. Jennifer Smith will be our RIDE Liaison through this process.

Ms. Nordquist: This list is the list for this year. Is there a period they are going to give you?

Mrs. Cylke: Yes. Three years. What if in one year we come up to 60%?

Ms. Nordquist: I think a lot of credit has to be given to the Core Team that was here and did everything to prevent them from getting on that list.

Ms. Mercer: These schools did not go on their achievement level only because of their graduation level. They have significant achievement levels.

Mr. Spooner: I'm disappointed that there are no parents here from Shea and Tolman. I find this to be a serious issue. There is not one school that there is not any group of teachers that is not just going through the ropes.

You see these low performing schools. I am a product of these schools. I'm not a rocket scientist but with this "No Child Left Behind" and George Bush, but then pulls the funding.

How do we get them there? These kids start as freshmen. Kids come for the football season and adios, there they go. Kids come to school and then have to go to work to help their parents. Students go in and out of training school. Do they really want to be there?

It's not helping the kids in Pawtucket. We're looking to do what we need to do in the professional way. Steve Jobs was adopted and was

a drop out. He was successful.

Mr. Tenreiro: Whole system reform started with Hans and Kim and now with Debbie. We need to focus with building capacity and trust the stakeholder groups and engaging families and these seem to be the right drivers. Ineffective driver doesn't seek the success it seeks. When you think of those, I'm concerned of faulty calculations and I saw it in Central Falls and how it demotivated in there.

I think the Superintendent said a number of very good things to employees. The low graduation rate is a systems issue. It's a socio economic poverty issue. We all possess this challenge and it is all within our will. Of all four options there is really only one. I re-emphasize the partnership with the Pawtucket Teachers' Alliance and we cannot go in the way of Central Falls. Those reforms do have an impact on students. You can only expect results in five years with drivers in place.

Mrs. Cylke: July 1st is the effective date.

Mr. Tenreiro: A change in leadership and a change in the school day and time. If we have a transformation model in place, we shouldn't have any problem moving forward.

Mrs. Cylke: Six fifty five minute period classes and we create more time. We take eighty minutes of math for low performers and use a seven or zero period day if they need assistance. When you talk about "Michael Fullan" he mentions wrong drivers.

Mr. Tenreiro: They say the LEAs must include modification for students and consider modify your block schedule. There's a classic example of two systems in conflict of one another. I look forward to a

process that is informed.

c. Update Stage II Facilities Process

Mrs. Cylke: There is some good news, the stage II facilities process. Last fall, Dr. Robert Schiller did a study and made a claim that Cotton & Company said it could save money by closing schools, but instead said we needed to add classroom space.

We came to you asking for management approval. That study showed that Stage I study was approved, the building was built, and the district reimbursed, but then realized it doesn't really meet the needs according to Joe DaSilva from RIDE. I met with Joe DaSilva to take the educational specifications and borrow the specifications for an elementary, middle and high school. It doesn't show the design of the school; it provides the needs that must be met.

We met recently with the Purchasing Agent of Pawtucket, David Clemente and we received a phone call that it was approved and our management team will be conducting focus groups with teachers, staff, principals, parents and kids and we will come back to you. My hope is by January we will have these ready for the architects. The real work is to ultimately pass a bond and we will be reimbursed by the State at 75%.

d. Upcoming October 14-15 Committee Governance Work Session

Mrs. Cylke: This Friday and Saturday we have the first governance work session. My attitude is very simple. Don McAdams wrote the book and this is a School Committee work session on how to better redesign an urban school district. The sessions will build upon the other and are based on "What School Boards Can Do: Reform

Governance for Urban Schools.” Best practice using case studies. CRSS is here to share with us what works well for us. Each section has a specific focus that you will hold me accountable for. It’s open to the public.

VI New Business-Action Items

a. Location of regular meetings for remainder of year

Mrs. Cylke: I erroneously scheduled meetings at the Central Administration Office but would like you to take a vote to schedule the meetings at Goff and Slater to see the new auditorium, the technology lab and the Read 180 lab.

It has to be in a handicapped accessible environment. We will check into that.

Ms. Nordquist moved to hold November’s regular meeting at Goff.

Ms. Bonollo seconded.

Mr. Araujo: I think it’s a great idea to move these meetings to see the different schools and having them would include more parent involvement.

Roll call

Mr. Araujo-yes; Ms. Bonollo-yes; Mr. Coughlin-yes; Mr. Noonan-yes;

Ms. Nordquist-yes; Mr. Tenreiro-yes; Mr. Spooner-yes

Motion carried unanimously.

VII Superintendent’s Report

Mrs. Cylke: Open houses are coming up at Shea and Tolman. Shea is 5:30 on Wednesday and Tolman is at 6:00 PM on Thursday.

We received an interesting copy of arbitration from RIDE regarding an out of district decision. The parent was saying that Jenks/JMW was a

CTE and her school district should pay her child's tuition. The decision states that the City of East Providence is responsible for the tuition for the music program for the 2011-2012 enrollment and it is signed by Commissioner Gist and the Hearing Officer.

Mr. Conlon: Woonsocket and Portsmouth already agreed to pay also.

Mrs. Cylke: I have already met with Bob Howe regarding emergency management plan. He's got your piece, Ms. Bonollo and I've also made sure he vets his plan with the Police and Fire Department. As well as the school nurses and Principals who are ultimately in charge. I think that the plan that is ultimately submitted is thorough.

This is an issue that I will come forward hopefully with a resolution with. A parent wrote to me and her concern is safety when children arrive at school in the morning. She doesn't have an issue with the Principal. It's when the children arrive at school in the morning and only the Principal is there. She stays with her child. The teacher's day starts when the student's day starts. It's a legitimate concern and something that we are certainly concerned about.

VIII Special Reports of School Committee Members

Mr. Araujo: On a personal note I'd like to congratulate my daughter Amanda who was elected as Vice President of her freshmen class of Shea High School. Congratulations. I know you'll do a good job and go get 'em.

Ms. Bonollo: Next Wednesday night there is a Wellness Committee Meeting in the Administration Building at 6:00 PM and we are advising our policy and we would like input from our faculty, members and anyone who would like to attend. You are more than

welcome to attend. We meet once a month, but your involvement would be entirely up to you, but we'd appreciate having you and having your input. I will be leaving on Sunday to go to Washington D. C. at the invitation of the First Lady to recognize this District for having 10 schools winning the healthy school challenge. My daughter is co treasurer at her school. There are two.

Mr. Noonan: Thank you all for coming and Joanne, please don't post anything on Facebook.

Mr. Coughlin: Good night.

Mr. Tenreiro: Pass.

Mr. Spooner: I would like to quickly say to everyone who passed along their condolences last week they were sincerely appreciated. It was a difficult week. For those of you who don't know, my sister passed last week and it was well appreciated. And yes it was Dianna's sister also, before I get beat up for that. But it was much appreciated from everyone. It's tough times out there for everyone and as Ron was saying it's not easy and just remember that the glass is always half full. Have a great evening everyone.

IX Adjournment

Ms. Nordquist moved to adjourn. Mr. Coughlin seconded.

Voice vote carried all in favor.

The Chairman adjourned the regular meeting of October 11, 2011 of the Pawtucket School Committee at 7:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Clerk

APPROVED November 15, 2011